

## Book Reviews

### **Learner-centred Pedagogy: Principles and Practice**

**Kevin Michael Klipfel & Dani Brecher Cook**

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#### **Review by Anne Lawrence**

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Librarians have always been teachers in one way or another, but having an understanding of pedagogy and designing teaching has not always been standard, with most instruction by librarians being delivered in a 'hit and run' style (time limited, one off sessions, tell the students what they need to know, expect follow up enquiries after). The book by Klipfel and Cook aims to address the concept of 'learner-centred pedagogy' and how it can be used by librarians as a method of making learning more meaningful and lifelong when they are delivering a variety of sessions; ranging from one-to-one enquiry desk based work to teaching lectures.

The book starts by summarising where things stand currently in the profession (from an American perspective) and what this book aims to do; and explains the need to teach why something is done as well as how it is done. It covers the theoretical background that help support ideas such as active learning, and the work of professional experts such as Terry Doyle and humanist Carl Rogers. In addition, it goes into detail regarding the key concepts surrounding what learning is, how significant learning occurs and how the mind retains and transfers learning to long-term memory. The authors also discuss what they call 'authentic learning' – adding context and meaning to students' learning and exploring the role that motivation plays. The authors present the idea that education is currently all about following rules and nothing about individuality, which stifles learning. This is something that is difficult for librarians as they spend little time with their students and very rarely get to know them as individuals, but the book does detail the typical interactions that librarians have with students and how these situations can lead to librarians understanding their students better and employing learner-centred techniques in order to support deeper learning. It highlights throughout that 'who we are as people matters' – that each individual will learn, respond and retain information differently, and how we cement that learning into long term memory will differ for everyone.

The layout and structure of the book is very easy to follow. The language is not over complicated, the theory is not overstated and the book flows well. Each chapter has a clear summary at the start, is broken down into comprehensible sections, and has its own references and additional materials section. The possibility of downloading useful lesson templates and guides is appealing, especially as the book itself is quite practical, with lots of useful tips and guidance for the reader to use in practice, rather than just thinking hypothetically. Chapter 3 is especially interesting where it details six cognitive principles for designing information literacy sessions. It starts with an imaginary last minute email from an academic asking for a library session (which is something most of us have experienced) and follows through the planning and delivery of that session, using the principles, and it makes a lot of sense due to the realistic contextualisation and examples given by the authors. Quite often, similar books lack the practical implementation stage, leaving the reader thinking 'how could I do this in practice?' However, this follows through and discusses the practical elements of this theory, and how it can be accommodated and utilised in reality.

As with any theory and methodology like this, it always has the potential to be difficult to implement and garner success in reality. Time and staffing are always at a premium, so trying to change your practice to accommodate new skills and techniques can be challenging. However, this book does break things down into small stages that are easy to instigate; for example, slight changes in language when talking to students, or getting the student to do searches themselves when at an enquiry desk rather than just demonstrating search technique to them. Even these small changes can reap satisfying results, with the student learning lifelong information literacy skills.

Overall, I enjoyed the book and would recommend it to librarians who are looking for ideas on how to put the student at the heart of their teaching.